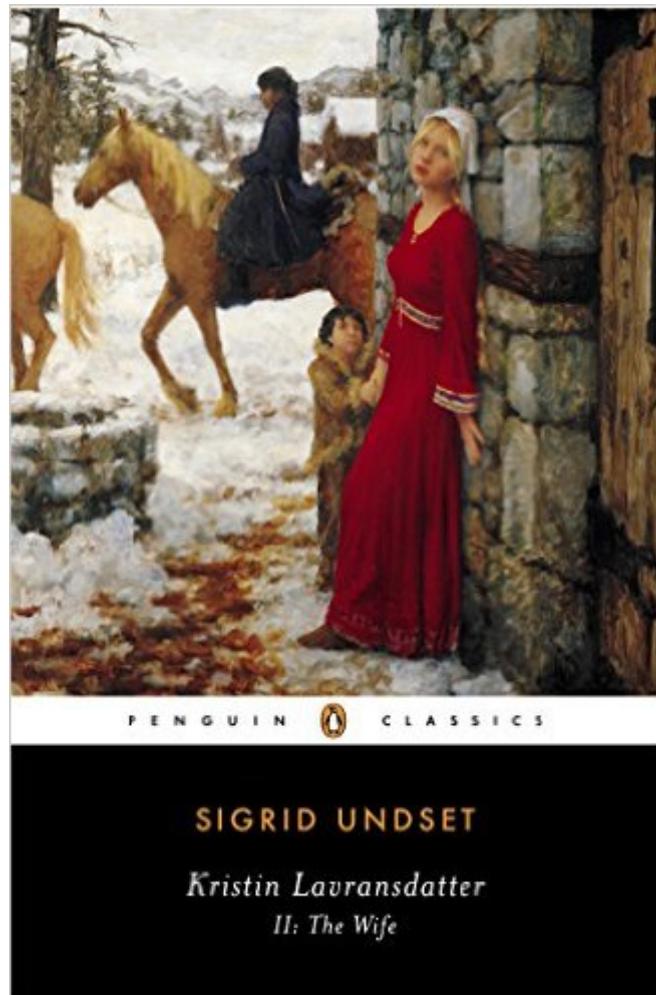


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Kristin Lavransdatter II: The Wife (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Kristin Lavransdatter interweaves political, social, and religious history with the daily aspects of family life to create a colorful, richly detailed tapestry of Norway during the fourteenth-century. The trilogy, however, is more than a journey into the past. Undset's own life—her familiarity with Norse sagas and folklore and with a wide range of medieval literature, her experiences as a daughter, wife, and mother, and her deep religious faith—profoundly influenced her writing. Her grasp of the connections between past and present and of human nature itself, combined with the extraordinary quality of her writing, sets her works far above the genre of "historical novels." This new translation by Tina Nunnally—the first English version since Charles Archer's translation in the 1920s—captures Undset's strengths as a stylist. Nunnally, an award-winning translator, retains the natural dialog and lyrical flow of the original Norwegian, with its echoes of Old Norse legends, while deftly avoiding the stilted language and false archaisms of Archer's translation. In addition, she restores key passages left out of that edition. Undset's ability to present a meticulously accurate historical portrait without sacrificing the poetry and narrative drive of masterful storytelling was particularly significant in her homeland. Granted independence in 1905 after five hundred years of foreign domination, Norway was eager to reclaim its national history and culture. Kristin Lavransdatter became a touchstone for Undset's contemporaries, and continues to be widely read by Norwegians today. In the more than 75 years since it was first published, it has also become a favorite throughout the world. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

I've just finished this second volume, and am waiting anxiously to begin the third. For those reading my review who have not yet read this second volume, I will try hard not to spoil your enjoyment by letting out too many elements of the story. I would also like to warn the potential reader not to read the Introduction until after you have finished this volume, since it too reveals details of the story that might spoil it for some readers. This story covers the years 1321 to 1335. According to the Introduction, Kristin is born in 1302, and so this novel takes us up to her 33rd year. This is one of those novels that will take you away into another world, medieval Norway of the early 1300's. It's a world so foreign to ours today that in many ways it almost resembles a work of fantasy. The characters might well be living on another planet. To really enjoy this novel, you will need to keep a notebook at your side order to keep the enormous number of characters and the familial relationships straight. There is a large carryover of characters from the first novel, and the addition of many new ones. It will also help to read a little in Wikipedia about the kings of Norway, especially Haakon V and Magnus VII, about Erling Vidkunsson, Queen Ingeborg, and Knut Porse. I can only imagine that without some effort to keep track of the characters and their inter-relationships, the reader may grow confused and discouraged, despite the masterful writing and translation. The characters in this novel are very finely wrought, some more than others. As for Kristin, she is perhaps the most complex character of all, and is not easy for the reader to sympathize with or understand. In many ways, she does not seem to dominate this novel as much as some of the other characters.

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